

Jujuba – Fruit for the Reluctant Gardener!

What thrives on neglect, loves long hot summers, is salt and drought tolerant, can survive -28F (yup, that's **negative** 28) and produces tons of fruit??? – JUJUBA!!! “Jujuba, what the heck is that?” you may ask. Jujuba (*Ziziphus jujuba*) comes from China and is a sweet fruit with an apple like flavor. You may have heard of it as Jujube or Chinese date. Some varieties, like Tigertooth, have the shape and coloring of a date, hence the nickname. Depending on the variety Jujuba fruit can be as small as a cherry or as large as a plum.



Tennessee, South Carolina and North Carolina.

While not commonly found in every orchard or nursery, seedling Jujubas were introduced into the USA as early as 1837. In 1908, known cultivars were imported by USDA agricultural explorer Frank N. Meyer (the same guy who got us the wonderful Meyer Lemon!). Frank Meyer eventually brought 67 accessions to the USDA California Chico Station and other USDA stations for cultivation research. Jujubas can now be found in California, New Mexico, Arizona, Washington, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi,

The Jujuba is a deciduous tree with shiny, 1-2 inch long, green oval leaves and some thorns on the new growth dependant on the cultivar. Most varieties have a graceful, drooping shape and will grow to 20ft tall (30-40ft if not pruned). Plants do have a habit of suckering from the root system, but these suckers can easily be kept at bay by mowing.

Jujubas bloom in late spring, thus avoiding late freezes, and the fruit ripens constantly from August to October. No worries about your fruit coming all at once!



Once the fruit starts turning brownish red to solid brown red is when you harvest. Try a few to see at which stage you like best. Fully ripe is when the fruit is a solid mahogany color. Don't pick green fruit as they won't ripen once off the tree.

Jujubas have a thin edible skin, sweet white flesh and a hard stone in the center containing 2 seeds. Ripe fruit will last 1 week at room temperature. Jujubas are great fresh, dried, candied or preserved.

Nutritionally, 100 grams (3.6 ounces) of raw Jujubas have 69 mg of Vitamin C whereas an equal amount of orange only has between 45-59 mg. Check out the USDA National Nutrient Database website for more nutritional information on Jujubas and other fruits:

<http://ndb.nal.usda.gov/ndb/search/list>

Jujubas are self fertile, have no serious disease, insect or nematode problems, and do very well in poor soil. They prefer sandy, well drained soils over heavy, wet soils. Jujuba trees need lots of sun, 15 feet of spacing, fertilizer and regular water to ensure good fruit quality. Buy a tree that is grafted or cutting grown to ensure you get the variety you want as Jujubas grown from seeds won't come true.



To read more about the Jujuba varieties at Just Fruits and Exotics, go to our website:

<http://www.justfruitsandexotics.com/Jujuba.htm> . For all those folks who thought they couldn't grow a fruit tree (without killing it!) give the Jujuba a try.

Don't know what to do with jujuba fruit? Here's a recipe for Jujuba Butter from the USDA publication B-1215 titled "Methods of Utilizing the Chinese Jujube" (my additions are in italics as the original directions needed clarification).

Jujube Butter

6 pints *raw* jujube pulp (*12 cups*)
1 teaspoon nutmeg
½ teaspoon cloves
2 teaspoons cinnamon
5 pints sugar (*10 cups*)
¼ pint vinegar (*1/2 cup*)
1 lemon (*cut up*)

Boil jujuba fruit *with lemon* until tender in sufficient water to cover it. Rub cooked fruit through a sieve or colander to remove the skin and seeds. *Add spices, sugar and vinegar and bring to a second boil.* Cook slowly until thick, put in jars and seal while hot.

Sounds yummy!!! Try substituting jububas for apples or pears in your fruit butter recipe. If you have a favorite jujuba recipe, let us know and we'll share it.

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